

A

REVIEW

OF THE

STATE

OF THE

ENGLISH NATION.

Saturday, August 24. 1706.

TIS hard, and something of a *Turkish* Doctrine, which I have been exclaiming against in my last; that the Success of every Action must be laid upon the Heads of the Managers, whether they have fairly discharged themselves or no, as if Men of great Employments were something more than others, and answerable for more than human Prudence.

This is to make Gods of them on one Hand, and talk of them, as if they held the Chain of Consequences in their Hands, and could anticipate Events; and on the other hand, it lowers them beneath the Class of every Freeman, that they must not have common Justice with the rest of their Fellow-Creatures.

We have now, speaking in the Name of the Confederacy, vast Events in Expectation:

and mighty Movements upon the Stage of Action in the World, the clashing Powers of Europe are like the Possessors of the Earth, dashing themselves against one another, and bringing to pass, not what every one in their shallow Conjectures and empty Heads have imagin'd, but what the wise invisible Governour of all things thinks fit to direct, to answer the great Purposes of his Providence; to this as to the supreme End of all human Actions, the mightiest Armies, the wisest Measures, the most consummate Experience and the greatest Conduct must submit.

Counsellors of State and War may assemble, Parliaments may meet and sit, Armies be rais'd, Fleets fitted out, and Measures be in the exactest manner concerted, and yet the End not be answer'd, for what is Man, that he should direct his steps? The

ways of the Almighty are in the Clouds, the Events of things are hid behind the dark Curtain of Futurity; his Providence is inscrutable, and no human Power can determine what shall, or what shall not be the Issue of these things.

Who shall examine, why he has thought fit to let one Man's Ambition rage to so great a Height, that all Europe has not been able to cast off his Chain? Why Virtue is trodden under Foot, and rampant Vice revells in the Destruction of the Innocent? Why Oppression reigns, Tyrants prosper, and Men of Blood trample upon Men of Peace? Why Truth sinks, and Falshood swims? — The End is the Answer to all these things, and *who shall see it?*

When Events answer, or cross our Expectations, what wild unsteady Creatures are we in our Behaviour, with Respect to Instruments? How is the Courage, Prudence, Conduct and Bravery of the General or Admiral exalted, the Character of the conquer'd, debased and lessen'd in the vulgar Opinion? Again, the same Conqueror, General or Admiral failing to flush our Fancies, and keep up the Images of things in our Imaginations; how are all the Defects of his Conduct search't for in every Action, that answers not our full Expectation?

And whence comes this? But from the vulgar Error of looking at Seconds and forgetting Principals, turning our Eye from the Original, and poring upon Instruments, when alas human things are guided by, and dependant upon a supernatural Influence; our Want of regarding, which makes all the false Constructions of things, and forms that incongruous Vapour, call'd VULGAR OPINION, which no wise, considering Man has the least Concern about.

Infinite Errors this Custom of judging things betrays us to; we judge by false Lights, form suggested Causes, draw preposterous Consequences, and bring our selves every Day to the Necessity of acknowledging we were Fools the Day before.

Success sanctifies the weakest Actions, nay sometimes the vilest; and the detested Tyrant gains the exalted Glory of a wise and

politick Governour; on the other hand the unhappy are always the Fools and Knaves of the World.

Triumphal Arches are erected for him, that by meer Chance, by whatever concurring Circumstances, has succeeded in an Action in it self most improbable, and which perhaps a cooler Head would not have attempted, while a Room in *Bedlam* is bespoken for him, that fail'd in a more probable Attempt, as a thing no Man in his Wits would have gone about. The Revolution has been justly celebrated, as a prodigious Undertaking, complicated with Circumstances that have every way encreas'd its Character of wonderful; The same Revolution attempted before, and as probable in its Circumstances to have succeeded, was sung about Streets as a senseless ridiculous Attempt; that those, who were concern'd in, merit little but our Pity as Lunatics.

Alexander, by the Glory of his Arms, gain'd immortal Honour, as we call it; and the Representation of his passing the River at the Battle of *Granicus*, adorns our Houses now as the Picture of one of the greatest Actions in the World; but what Rashness and Temerity had he been charg'd with, and how had he lain in *Honour's Trunk Bed*, had he lost his Life and his brave handful of Men there, as having thrown himself away in a preposterous Attempt of passing a River to attack an Army, which was near 30 times as strong as his own?

All these Speculations serve to bring me to this general; That 'tis not in the Power of Instruments to issue the great Affairs of the Nation; and our flying in the Faces of Men that do their Duty, because they cannot answer for Success, is a Cruelty, which if practis'd, no Men of Honesty, Principles or Estates can be safe in, or will undertake the Service of their Country.

When Actions fail, our next Step is to enquire into the Conduct of the Persons; and so far we are right, provided we will judge rightly; if by Knavery, Ignorance or Negligence, Disasters come, punish, correct, remove, and answer a God's Name, the more of that the better; and had it been severely practis'd for some Years past,

we had suffer'd less in *England* both Body, Purse and Reputation.

But we have got a way now of punishing by the lump, and loading our publick People, only because things do not answer our Expectation, without being able to descend to particulars, or bring the Charge home to the Persons.

And what's the End of all this Discourse? now may somebody say, that has long waited for our Application——Really, Gentlemen, I am not at a Loss for it——I have no Interest in the great Managers of things on the Stage, nor any Expectations from them; do we change Hands every time we change Scenes; 'tis all one to me, as some stand above the Wrath of Men, I stand below it; and I am as safe as they, and as freely dare to speak my Mind, if I see Cause——But we are now in the middle of a Campaign, and no Man knows the End of it; the Money is rais'd, the Ships gone to Sea, strong Armies take the Field, our General is enter'd upon Action, unlook'd for Victory has crown'd his Attempts, and timely Reliefs are sent to every Part, as far as possible; and yet because Towns do not fall like *Dagon*, before the Ark of God; because Winds and Seas do not immediately obey us, eternal Murmurs crowd our Streets, and the Conduct of Generals, Admirals, and Ministers of State must make us Amends

for the Disappointment——'Tis a good *Turkish* Maxim I confess, but I never saw it so much practis'd in *England* before; but let us bring it to the Touch——Come, Gentlemen, stand forth, and now tell us, what is neglected, what Objections to Conduct have you, what left undone, which ought to have been done? tell it now before it be too late to mend it? Tell it now to show, you had rather rectify a Mistake, than censure it? Tell us now, if there is any visible Deficiency in our Preparation, any Failure in our Dispatches, any Confederate abandon'd, any Advantage let slip, and necessary preparations omitted——

If you cannot tell it now, never complain hereafter; never say, another should have seen it, and not to be ignorant, unless you can see the Defect now, or prove; that they, who are at the Helm of Action, could or ought to have seen it, no future Scandal can lye against any, be they Men of the State, Army or Navy; To wait for the Success of things, and then applaud or condemn the Managers of Affairs, merely by their Success, is *a-la-mode* a just, unjust, unchristian, barbarous and intollerable, and for that reason I enter this Protestation against it; If you have any Fore-sight of Matters, and any Objection to make, speak now, or as in the Case of Matrimony, you ought for ever after to hold your Tongues

MISCELLANEA.

THE Author of the *Refusal* in one of his late Papers, having promis'd a Cessation of ill Language; a thing I have often complain'd of, and propos'd calm arguing for the future, without those useless Parts of Dispute, call'd Railling and Reflection. I think my self oblig'd to thank him for so agreeable an Offer, and if in the Course of my Writing, it comes before me to debate any thing with him, he shall find, I covet nothing more than setting things in a true Light, without the Assistance of *Billingsgate* Rhetorick, a thing quite out of

my way, and which I hope, the Truth I defend, stands in no need of.

And to begin with him in a Method agreeable to this Resolution——He has pleas'd to invite me to make an Acknowledgment for the Review of *Feb. 21st*, which relates to the Story of *Diebampton* in *Devonshire*, and two Clergy-men charg'd with personating the Justices of Peace, and setting their Hands to a Warrant, to press the poor Man mention'd there.

Now, tho' I have no body concern'd in that Affair in Town to refer to, yet thus much